



National Safety Survey

EHS Today readers chimed in about how budgets, increasing responsibilities and a new administration might impact workplace safety in 2017.

By **Stefanie Valentic**

Safety leadership from the top down is one of the keys to employee engagement and positive safety culture, and 2017 National Safety Survey respondents indicate that executives are taking an active role in keeping workers safe.

Nearly 82 percent of respondents said top management of their organization provides both active and visible support for occupational safety and health. This claim with a consistent three-year increase in safety budgets. More than 71 percent of safety professionals said their budgets grew from the previous year.

Overall, respondents feel their allocated safety budgets still are cost prohibitive when it comes to keeping workers out of harm's way. If resources were not an issue, they would wish for:

— A ground safety program that complied with applicable law/code/IBR and accepted industry standards for safety of its workforce, with training, inspection, quality assurance, follow-up, reporting and incentive to participate. Incentive via punitive or judicial process and/or beneficial feedback and awarding performance protocol.....

— A complete overhaul of the machine guarding program to make needed improvements for all equipment in the facility. We are currently working through a list of 700 observations to determine the best guarding method and implement as resources are available.

— More detailed safety policies which are moved to the top of the food chain and not housed with each individual department. We need consistency across the board.

Safety is an all-encompassing term for one of many responsibilities of a safety manager's role, according to survey respondents. Respondents specifically highlighted occupational health, ergonomics, fire protection, risk management and environmental compliance among their top priorities.

While juggling a host of responsibilities meant to keep the workplace safe, EHS professionals also must also be diligent in compliance. A new administration in office could change how compliance – and in turn enforcement – are handled.

About 60 percent of respondents said they feel the Trump administration will have a negative impact on OSHA and workplace safety. Those who commented cited concern for President Donald Trump's lack of education about government entities and failure to appoint a new head of OSHA. On the opposite spectrum, EHS professionals said a reduction in rules and regulations could shift workplace safety to be more compliance-driven rather than enforcement-driven.

Others had this to say about potential budget cuts for essential government agencies:

— *Cutting funding for safety has historically not improved safety. Many organizations only have safety because the government regulates it. Without that regulation safety could start to head back to the way it was handled during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Which means not very well at all and little regard if any for the safety of the worker to reduce cost and improve profit.*

— *I think it will be difficult for Trump to promote workplace safety because he calls for cutting two laws before passing one.*

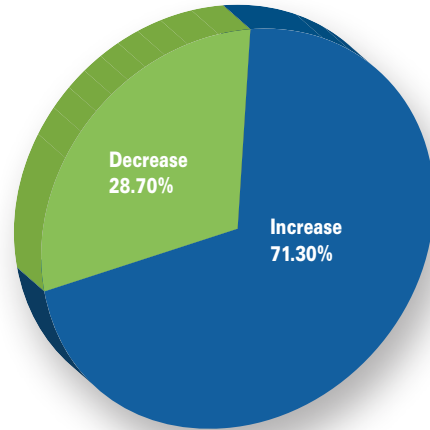
— *He appears to be more interested in the impacts on businesses bottom lines and nothing related to worker or environmental protection.*

— *... The goal of the rules and regulations for safety and environmental agencies is to provide guidelines and expectations to allow employees to be able to perform their jobs safely and companies function in a way as to enhance the general community and not ultimately harm it. When anything other than the goal of safety is driving the rules and regulations the cost to business can quickly become oppressive. I believe the Trump administration will strive to maintain and improve safety and environmental conditions while mitigating excessive costs to American business and competitiveness.*

— *I think OSHA will go through an adaptation to be more manufacturing friendly, but not at the expense of safety.*



Compared to the previous year, did the budget for occupational safety and health in your organization increase or decrease in 2015-2016?



If resources were not an issue, what would be at the top of your wish list in regards to ensuring employee safety?

“Better communication equipment for all of us to work together and rely on each other.”

“Better training! Not more. Better.”

“Additional staff to focus on specific areas like ergonomics, machine guarding, accident/incident prevention and emergency response.”

“Full, digitized system of reporting for injuries, near misses and employee observations.”

“Completion of projects to discover the levels of OSHA compliance related to requirements/issues for the individual, and the engineering solutions to reduce or eliminate issues such as noise, ergonomic issues, training, etc.”

“Significantly more behavioral safety training for construction workers.”

“Improvement in material handling systems to reduce or eliminate manual handling of product in transporting from one cell to another.”

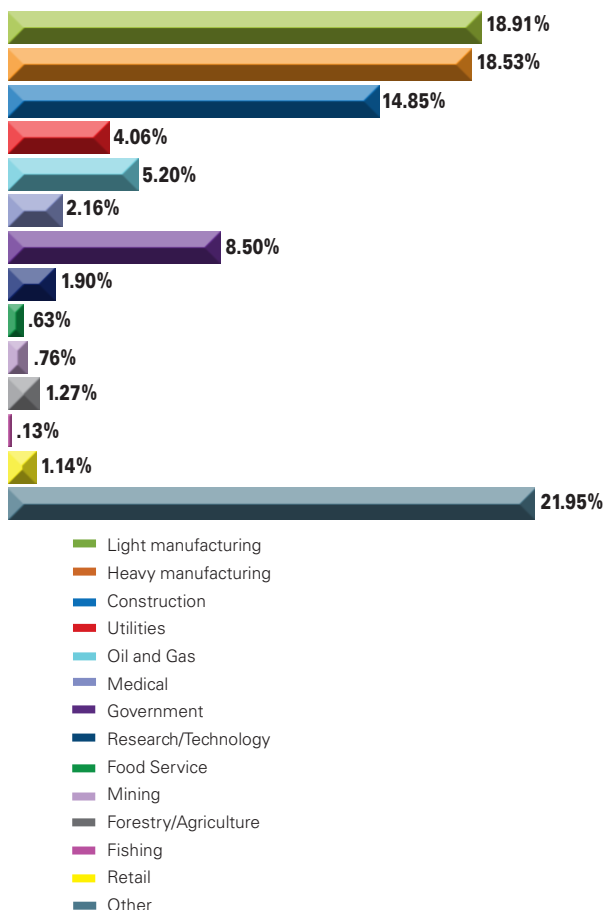
“As of right now, it would be to improve our fleet safety program and to provide backup cameras on all of our vehicles.”

“Increase employee feedback and recognition for doing the right thing.”

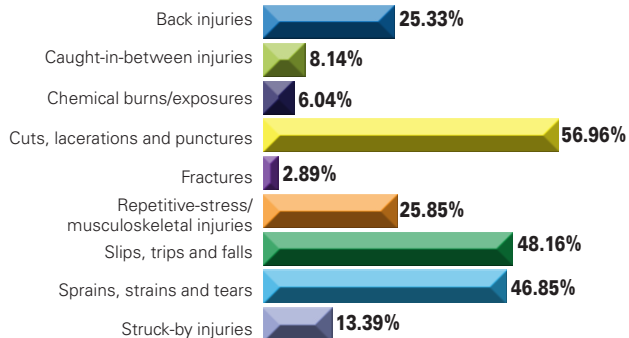
For which areas do you have responsibility?



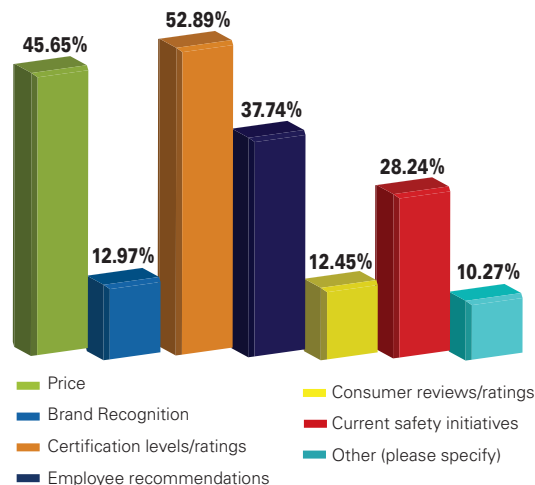
What industry are you in?



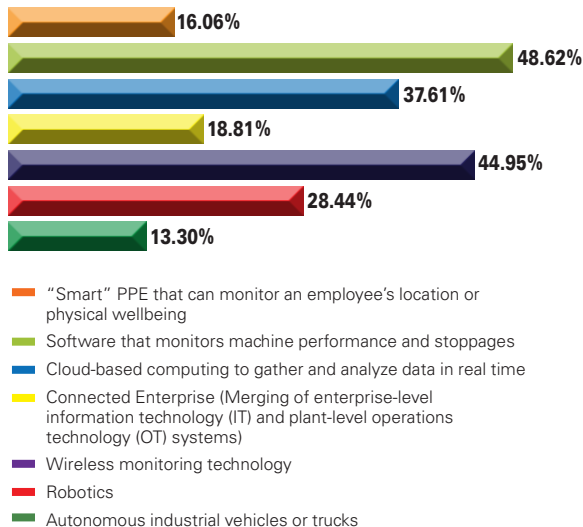
What are the most common types of injuries at your facility/company?



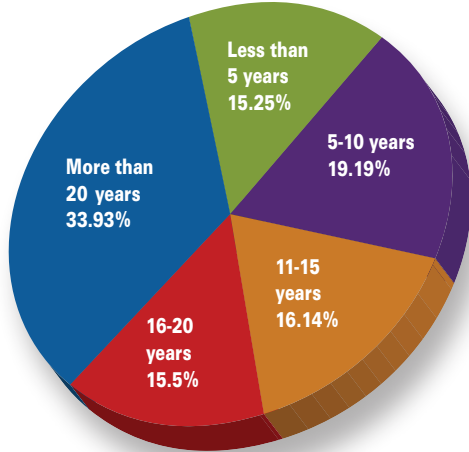
When purchasing PPE for your company, which two factors do you most consider?



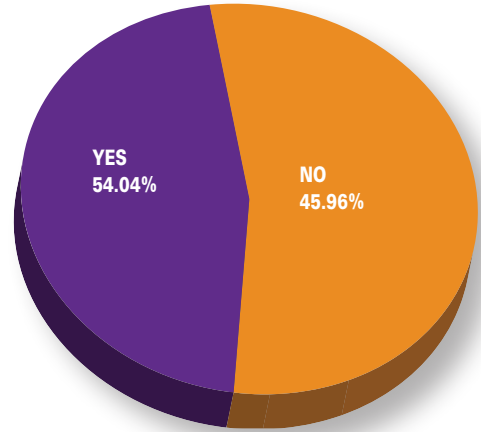
IoT or IIoT applications you use:



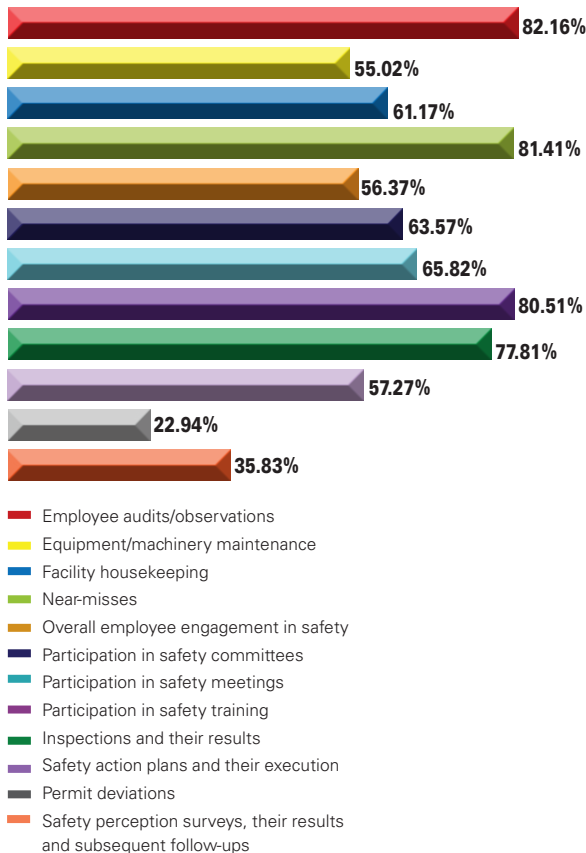
How long have you worked in the environmental, health and safety (EHS) field or had safety responsibilities?



Do you use or are you planning to use software to track, manage and report data about your facility's safety performance?



Leading indicators that you track:

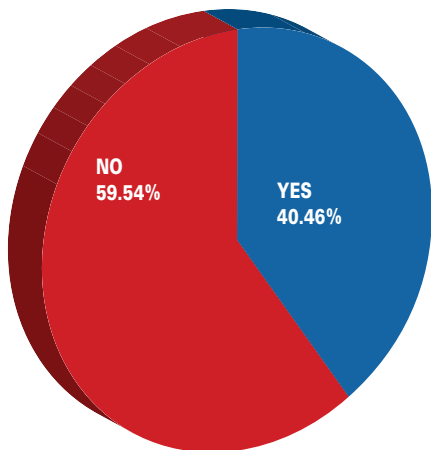


Using Data to Improve a Facility's Safety Performance

More than half of survey respondents indicated they would use software to improve their facility's safety performance. Here is how they would use that data.

- Track employees' training to ensure they are current. All other software is in use as a resource for safety to use to reduce risk and accidents.
- Narrow in on breakdowns through analytics and improve the areas with precise focus.
- Use the data to review trends and develop systems to increase employee involvement.
- Analyze which specific workplace or activity is at most risk in order to prioritize the focus and efforts for ESH campaigns.
- Analyse essential and contributory factors (also known as causes; root cause; hazards; risk or other meaningless/ineffective approach).
- Use it to to better aggregate the information and review possible trends; especially for near miss reporting.
- Communication of performance to employees to keep them focused on the company's expectation that employee has the resources and knowledge that they need to work safe every shift, every day.
- Create their own programs. "I compare leading and lagging indicators to determine relationships," said one respondent.

Will the Trump administration have a positive effect on OSHA?



EPA: 61% of respondents said the administration would not have a positive effect on the EPA, citing budget cuts as a concern.

What would you like to see OSHA focus on in the next four years?

